

REMARKS

Claims 1 through 18 were presented for examination in the present application and remain pending upon entry of the instant amendment.

Applicants note with appreciation to withdrawal of the supplemental restriction requirement and, thus, the examination of claims 1 through 18.

Applicants also note with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 8 and 10 through 16. Claims 10, 14, and 15 have each been amended into independent format, namely to include the elements of claim 1. Thus, claims 10 through 12 and 14 through 16 are in condition for issuance.

Figures 3 and 5 through 11 have been amended in the manner suggested by the Examiner. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections to the drawings are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 through 7, 9, 17, and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,727,186 to Skotnicki et al. (Skotnicki).

Independent claim 1 has been amended to recite the step of “removing at least a portion of said support structure after forming said first void (emphasis added)”.

Skotnicki discloses covering the upper part of the device with a layer 24 of a silicon dioxide and then forming a vertical hole through the silicon dioxide layer 24, the silicon layer 19, the silicone dioxide layer 18, the active area 14, 16, and an upper portion of substrate 12. Thus, Skotnicki discloses removing the silicon dioxide layer 24 before removing the remaining layers.

It is respectfully submitted that the system of Skotnicki, which removes the silicon dioxide layer 24 before removing the remaining layers, does not disclose or suggest

"removing at least a portion of said support structure after forming said first void" of amended claim 1.

Claim 1 is therefore believed to be in condition for allowance. Claims 2 through 9, 13, 17, and 18 are also believed to be in condition for allowance for at least the reason that they depend from claim 1. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection to claims 1 through 9, 13, 17, and 18 are respectfully requested.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Such action is solicited.

If for any reason the Examiner feels that consultation with Applicants' attorney would be helpful in the advancement of the prosecution, the Examiner is invited to call the telephone number below.

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Respectfully submitted,



Charles N. J. Ruggiero
Reg. No. 28,468
Attorney for Applicant(s)
Ohlandt, Greeley, Ruggiero & Perle, L.L.P.
One Landmark Square, 10th floor
Stamford, CT 06901-2682
Tel: (203) 327-4500

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:

The attached sheets of drawings include changes to Figures 3 and 6 through 11. Figure 3 has been amended to better differentiate void 130 from portion 126. Figures 6 through 11 have been amended to remove the line between portions 114/116 and 106/104.